

SENATE—Monday, September 27, 1999

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the Honorable WILLIAM H. FRIST, a Senator from the State of Tennessee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The guest Chaplain, Father Paul Lavin, pastor, St. Joseph's Catholic Church on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC, will lead the Senate in prayer.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain, Father Paul Lavin, offered the following prayer:

Listen to the words of the first letter of Paul to Timothy:

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected when received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the invocation of God in prayer.

Let us pray.

Lord God, from the abundance of Your mercy enrich Your sons and daughters who serve in the Senate and safeguard them. Strengthened by Your blessing, may they always be thankful to You and bless You with unending joy. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CRAIG THOMAS, a Senator from the State of Wyoming, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF THE ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,

Washington, DC, September 27, 1999.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, section 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable WILLIAM H. FRIST, a Senator from the State of Tennessee, to perform the duties of the Chair.

STROM THURMOND,
President pro tempore.

Mr. FRIST thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 3:30 p.m. Following morning business, the Senate will begin consideration of two resolutions that were introduced on Friday regarding education. The Lott and Daschle resolutions will be debated concurrently for 2 hours. Then the Senate will proceed to two stacked votes. Therefore, Senators can expect the first vote at approximately 5:30 p.m. Following the votes, the Senate may begin consideration of any conference reports, appropriations bills, or nominations available for action.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 3:30 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for not to exceed 5 minutes each.

Under the previous order, the Senator from Wyoming is recognized to speak for up to 1 hour.

Mr. DORGAN addressed the Chair.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. THOMAS. Yes, I will yield.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, let me ask unanimous consent that, following the 1 hour following the Senator from Wyoming and the hour by the Senator from Illinois, I be recognized for 20 minutes beginning at 2 o'clock in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

EDUCATION

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, we are facing the last week for the consideration of appropriations bills for the next fiscal year. I expect we will end up having a continuing resolution—I hope so—so we can finish our work without an interruption, the closing down of the Government.

One of the issues, of course, that is most important to all of us is that of

education. I wanted to talk—and will be joined by several of my colleagues during the course of this hour—a little bit about strengthening education.

The Republicans have had, and continue to have, a strong education agenda, one that reflects the view we share on this side of the aisle, that of returning control to the State and local levels so more of the decisions can be made by the school boards, by States, by parents, making Federal programs more flexible so there can be assistance from the Federal Government but at the same time allowing local governments to have the flexibility to adjust educational programs and school programs so they fit.

My State of Wyoming is unique in that we have lots of space and not too many people. Chugwater, WY, would have quite a different educational approach than Philadelphia. I think those differences need to be recognized. We have worked hard to move towards block granting of Federal money directly to States and to local school districts. I happen to believe that is a very important item in terms of Federal participation in elementary and secondary education.

There are differences of view as a matter of fact as to what the role of the Federal Government is with regard to elementary and secondary education. Many believe, of course, that it is the primary role of the local governments. I share that view. I share the view, however, that the Federal Government can assist, and in doing that, it needs to assist in a way that local officials can prevail.

Underlying this debate that we will hear a great deal about today and every day is a fundamental philosophical difference as to how you approach education. The Democrat approach is to create a series of new mandates and new programs such as 100,000 federally funded teachers to deal with class size. There is a different approach as to classroom units depending on where you are. Most States—I believe 43 out of 50—have this 18 to 1 ratio about which they talk. The Democrats are talking about federally funded school construction and afterschool programs, all of which sounds great and probably has some merit, but the fact is we ought to be thinking more about funding the programs that are already there, such as IDEA, those kinds of programs, than we should be talking about expanding into new programs. Democrats don't like the idea of letting local people make the decisions. They continue to want the educational bureaucracy in Washington to call the shots.